

You do not have to give up work to foster, but you do need one carer with the flexibility to be home-based and available to care for children placed with you, as appropriate to their age and individual needs, both outside of school hours and for occasional one-offs and short-notice emergencies during the school day.

If relying on alternative cover, this needs to be a trusted family member or friend who knows the child well, is willing to positively take on this role, and to undertake an enhanced DBS check and social worker interview.

If you are working at the time of your fostering application and you plan to continue doing so when a foster child is placed, then please bear in mind the following:

- If hoping to reduce or adjust your working hours to fit around a foster child's needs, we advise you to discuss this with your employer at an appropriate time, to ascertain whether this is an option
- If reducing hours or giving up 'work' to foster, you may want to explore whether benefits may be available to replace lost income – contacting your local CAB is one way forward
- If you are unsure about levels of fostering allowances and payments, and whether they will offset any loss of income, please speak with your stage 1 worker.

While you may feel confident leaving your own children at after school clubs or with a childminder, this is rarely a good option for foster children, as they need a home base where they can feel safe and secure and the stability of consistent care. Your work arrangements need to take this into account, including consideration of:

- What arrangements will be in place to get a foster child ready and out to school each morning?
- Is there scope to accompany a foster child to and from school each day (NOTE – if the school is some distance away a taxi service is generally provided)?
- What arrangements are in place if, for example, a foster child is sick, or a meeting has to be held during school hours?
- What arrangements are in place to collect a foster child from school, if necessary, and to provide care at the end of each school day?
- If needing additional cover on an occasional or regular basis, is there a close family member or friend willing and able to provide consistent care in a home environment to a potentially challenging child? Are they willing to be enhanced-DBS checked and to meet with a social worker?
- How will cover during school holidays be provided if you are working e.g. sharing the care between partners / trusted relative or friend/ scope to work flexi hours such as term-times only / scope to work at home?
- Remember that, while you may be confident for your own older children and teenagers to safely and happily entertain themselves with minimal checking while you work from home, a foster child or young person will generally need a consistently high level of supervision, ongoing structured activities, and clear routines throughout each holiday period.

Please speak with your social worker if you have any further queries or would like to discuss your personal work situation and plans in more detail.